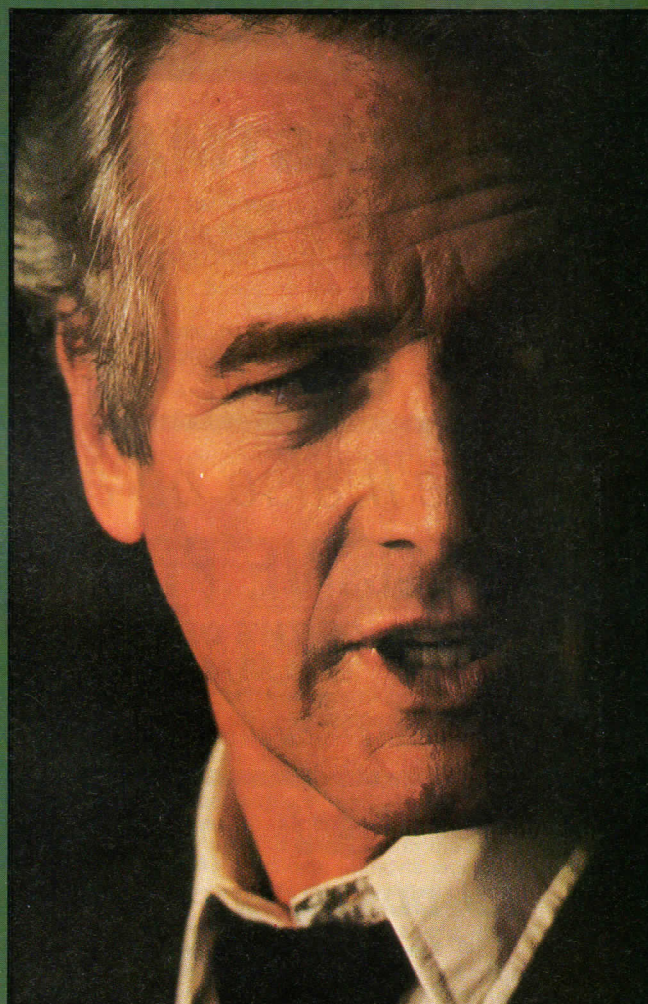


Film Review

35p MARCH 1983

GERE'S LATEST TRIUMPH

'An Officer and a Gentleman'



**6th TIME
LUCKY FOR
NEWMAN?**

in 'THE VERDICT'

Inside stories:

THE MAN WHO IS

Gandhi

& THIS YEAR'S ROYAL FILM

Film Fare includes

FRANCES THE DARK CRYSTAL

The World According To Garp

THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER

Film Review

March 1983 Vol.33 No.3
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COVER PICTURES

Richard Gere and Debra Winger in *An Officer and a Gentleman* (Paramount); Paul Newman in *The Verdict* (20th Century-Fox).

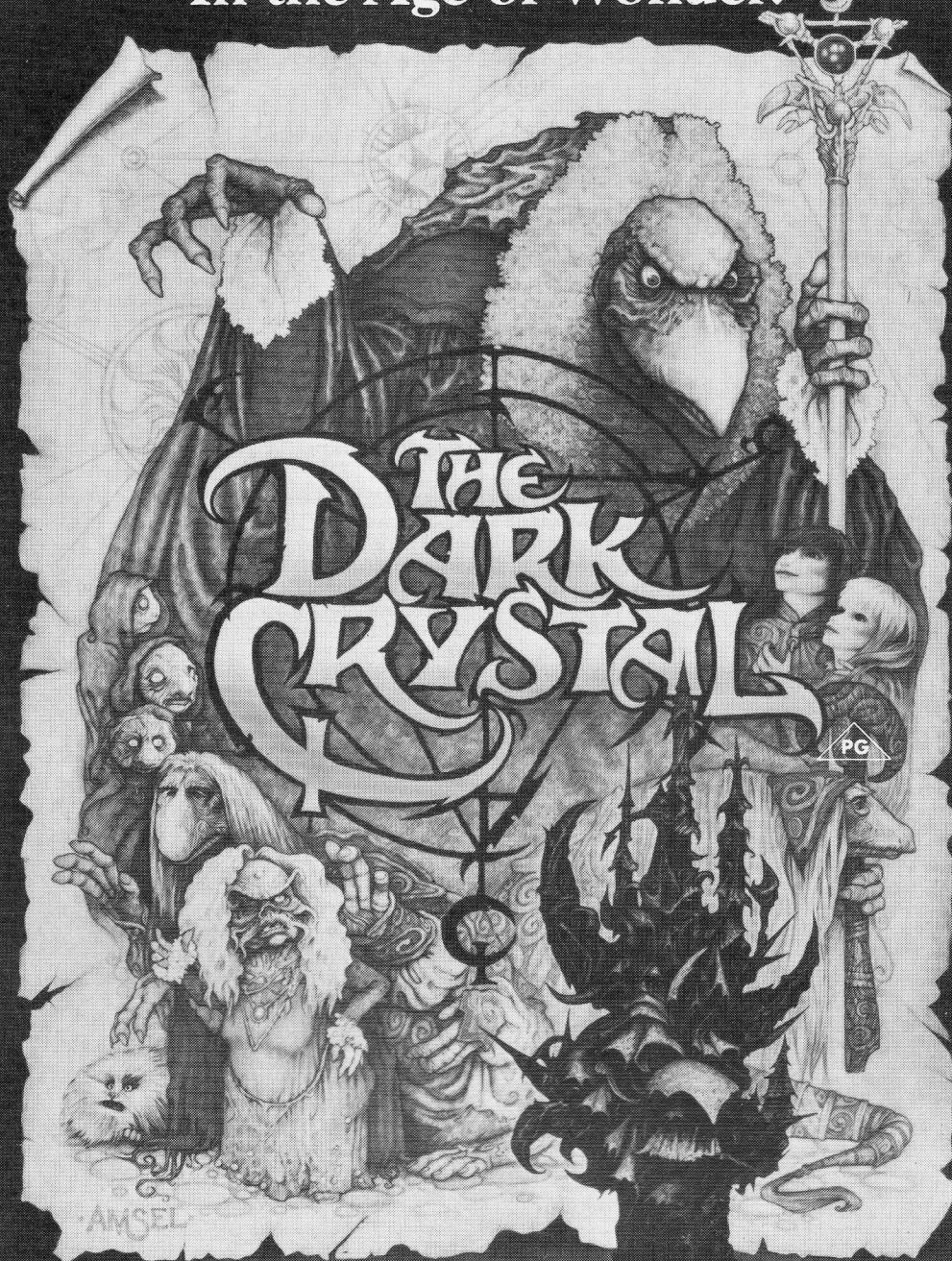
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Another World, Another Time...
In the Age of Wonder.



LEW GRADE Presents for ITC ENTERTAINMENT

A JIM HENSON Film

"THE DARK CRYSTAL"

Directed by JIM HENSON and FRANK OZ Produced by JIM HENSON and GARY KURTZ

Screenplay by DAVID ODELL Story by JIM HENSON Music by TREVOR JONES

Conceptual Designer BRIAN FROUD Executive Producer DAVID LAZER

Panavision® Technicolor®  **DOLBY STEREO**™ IN SELECTED THEATRES Distributed by United International Pictures.  © 1982 UNIVERSAL CITY STUDIOS, INC.

Available now three beautiful books: "World of the Dark Crystal" Illustrated by Brian Froud. Published by Mitchell Beazley.

"The Dark Crystal": A novel with illustrations. From Futura Publications. "The tale of the Dark Crystal." An enchanting picture book. From Macmillan Children's Book.

**FROM FEBRUARY 17 IN THE WEST END AND ACROSS LONDON
ACROSS THE COUNTRY FROM MARCH 31**

Jen (left), searching for the powerful shard of crystal, finds it with the formidable one eyed astronomer Aughra.



Although made by the creators of the Muppets, 'The Dark Crystal' has an entirely different type of puppet to introduce you to

Kira, Jen's fellow Gelfling, is taken prisoner by the malevolent, misshapen Skeksis.



A WEIRD OF MAKE



They say there's nothing new under the sun, but occasionally film-makers do come up with a new form of film entertainment. Last year it was *Tron* with its amazing computer graphics. This year it's *The Dark Crystal* which is an epic-scale fantasy with puppet-type participants instead of actors.

The puppets are the miraculously manipulated creations of Jim Henson and Frank Oz of Muppet fame. But the *Dark Crystal* puppets are far removed from Kermit, Miss Piggy, Fozzie Bear and company who enlivened television and cinema screens in the 'seventies.

Forget the Muppets when you go to see *The Dark Crystal*. Gone are the cloth-faced, beady-eyed, wildly gesticulating creatures inside which you can detect a guiding hand (except for one sequence in which the Pod People indulge in riotous revelry). Here are creatures of a totally different conception — as you can tell from the scenes reproduced on this page.

Based on the weird drawings of Brian Froud (he was Conceptual Designer for the film), they're extremely bizarre, often grotesque. They belong to another world in another time. Their planet's a pretty spooky place. Sometimes it's difficult to tell flora from fauna. What looks like vegetation on a riverbank will suddenly disappear into a hole, or a whole area of innocent-looking ground will open up with an obscene mouth and gobble up anything passing by.

Dominating this strange world is an evil band of creatures called The Skeksis,



Kira, her furry pet Fizzgig, and a member of the Pod People.

whose misshapen bodies are topped by heads resembling monstrous birds of prey. They rule from a strange castle which houses a gigantic crystal that gives them their power. But this castle and its miraculous crystal were once owned by a wise race whom the Skeksis decimated.

A shard of the crystal is missing and, if replaced, will spell doom for the Skeksis. They are troubled as the time approaches when, according to ancient prophecy, a race of elfin creatures called Gelflings will destroy their power and wipe them out. The Skeksis believe they have slaughtered all Gelflings in an attempt to avert the catastrophe, but one has survived — a boy called Jen who has been reared by a race of mystics. These good and wise creatures now give him the task of finding the missing shard of crystal and gaining access to the Skeksis' castle to replace it and restore peace to the planet.

Jen, it should be stressed, is the nearest thing in the film resembling a human being — he and a girl Gelfling called Kira who also happens to have survived, whom he meets and who shares his adventures. In one of their cliff-hanging adventures they have to leap over a precipice but are saved by the fact that she has wings that she reveals for the occasion. "I didn't know Gelflings have wings," says the boy as they glide to safety. "Only girl Gelflings," she says.

So, you see, despite its bizarre and sinister side, *The Dark Crystal* is not without humour. It's also there in the shape of a cute little canine type creature (more a rolling ball of fur) that accompanies Jen and Kira. Other humorous little touches are the mice scurrying around the Skeksis' cavernous castle.

The Dark Crystal is Jim Henson's brain child, and it's taken him five years to see it reach the screen. As well as engaging Frank Oz as co-director, he made Gary Kurtz (*Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back*)

co-producer. Preparations for shooting were incredibly complicated — nearly 500 people worked for months on the intricate construction of the puppets (some of them had as many as twenty moving parts), on their elaborate clothing and on the remarkable sets — that's three times the number of people behind the scenes of the average film.

To test the new type of puppet they were creating, Gary Kurtz tried one out in *The Empire Strikes Back*. It was Yoda, the ancient, gnome-type creature in the swamps who enlightened Luke Skywalker about The Force.

One of the outstanding characters in *The Dark Crystal* is a grumpy old harridan called Aughra, an astronomer who helps Jen in his quest for the missing crystal shard. Not only does she have only one eye, but she can remove it from its socket and hold it aloft for better vision!

As with the Muppet movies, Henson and Oz chose to shoot *The Dark Crystal* in English studios. This is a fine testimony to British craftsmanship, and the hundreds of people involved have made a technically flawless film that will delight all fantasy fans. □

WORLD BELIEVE



Two of the evil breed of Skeksis, who are always fighting for power.



Right: Jen and Kira ride the remarkable Landstriders who come to their rescue at an opportune moment.